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## Weaponizing antisemitism

The U.S. capitalist establishment is whipping up a pitched frenzy over antisemitism to both divert anger from and also justify Israel's renewed bombing in Gaza. This campaign is increasing repression against those who demonstrate pro-Palestinian sentiment.



**Pro-Palestine slogan projected on a University of Pennsylvania building in November 2023. WW Photo: Joe Piette**

Under capitalism, antisemitism is a real threat, a constant feature in a society of haves and have-nots, along with racism, misogyny, xenophobia and anti-LGBTQ2S+ bigotry. Such a culture of inequality is on constant lookout for scapegoats to deflect blame from the suffering imposed on people by the rich.

The current wave of accusations of antisemitism are being weaponized against opponents of Israel's criminal genocide against Gaza. With the mass bombing targeting Palestinians in Gaza — already killing over 17,000, injuring 40,000 and leaving thousands buried under rubble — media coverage makes it look like the true victims of the Israeli Occupation Forces' genocidal onslaught are pro-Israel students on college campuses.

There's quite a contrast between the repression being carried out against pro-Palestinian voices and the tolerant attitude of police and authorities toward known fascist groupings who before Oct. 7 had targeted neighborhoods with true antisemitic campaigns.

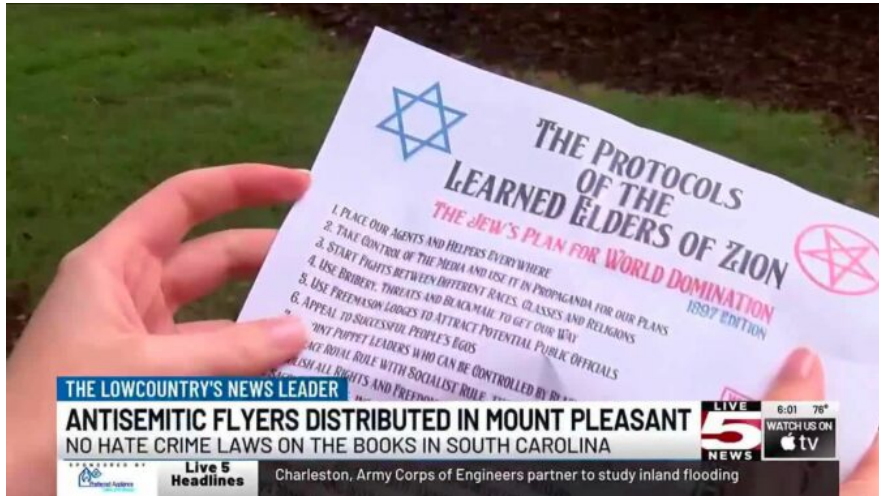
The University of Pennsylvania has come under fire from its billionaire donors for hosting the Palestine Writes Literature Festival, and its president, Elizabeth Magill, was forced to resign after being grilled by a Congressional committee, just because UPenn students support Palestinians. Yet the fact that the state of Pennsylvania had been a prime target of organized fascist groups before Oct. 7 has stayed under the radar. (coverage of Palestine Writes: [workers.org/2023/09/73535/](https://workers.org/2023/09/73535/))

In an online article headlined "Pennsylvania was a top state for hate group propaganda in 2022," it was reported that antisemitic incidents went up by 65% in Pennsylvania in 2022. The article featured a map showing hundreds of incidents that year. (LehighValleyLive.com, March 10)

The state was in the top five of a nationwide surge in antisemitic incidents. Incidents in Texas were up by a whopping 89%. In Florida, the number was 71%. California's increase rate was 41%. While U.S. fascist and Klan activity is nothing new, such mobilizing has increased dramatically in the last few years in the wake of Trumpism and especially since the bogus "Stop the Steal" campaign.

### **Neo-nazi hate groups' ranks swell**

The Jan. 6, 2021, right-wing Capitol riot served as a nationally televised recruitment ad that helped swell the ranks of groups like Patriot Front, the Proud Boys, the Goyim Defense League, NSC-131, the Oath Keepers and many others. After 40 Proud Boys members were charged in relation to Jan. 6, 2021, their active chapters increased from 43 in 2020 to 72 in 2021 (Southern Poverty Law Center).



### **An example of antisemitic leaflet being spread by white supremacist hate groups.**

In June 2023, a Georgia synagogue was targeted with the first antisemitic attack in its 165-year history. Many publicized instances of the new role of organized fascist groupings featured their violent targeting of drag story hours, Neo-nazi groups hanging banners on overpasses or attacks on anti-racist mobilizations in the wake of the George Floyd protests.

However, with the exception of high-profile cases, like those of individuals who participated in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot, fascist groupings haven't faced even a fraction of the repression that pro-Palestinian groups have.

### **No state action against antisemitic flyers**

In dozens of cities, white supremacist groups have been free to repeatedly organize mass leafleting campaigns — and face no consequences. In many instances, city residents have been waking up to find their lawns littered with antisemitic flyers left in baggies and weighted down to prevent them from blowing away.

Some flyers cited the Protocols of the Elders of Zion — an old antisemitic fiction manufactured in Tsarist Russia — while others blamed Jewish people for COVID-19 or COVID-19 policies, employed the old trope of Jewish people owning and running the media and the banks or pushed the “great replacement theory.” All principally targeted the Jewish community and used antisemitic messaging to also attack the LGBTQ2S+ community, migrants, the African American community and advocates for abortion access.

In stark contrast to the vigorous attacks on pro-Palestinian groups is the shoulder-shrugging acceptance by police and elected officials, who repeatedly said there was

nothing they could do to counter these campaigns which placed giant targets on the backs of Jewish people.

Officials issue plenty of “hate has no place here” statements. But in January 2022, the Miami-Dade County prosecutor said she would only take action “if there is evidence that meets the requirements of Florida law for a criminal prosecution.” Similarly, police spokesperson Kenia Fallat told CBS News that antisemitic flyers distributed across south Florida in June 2023 were a “concern” but “not a crime.”

After mass distribution of antisemitic leaflets in Texas towns Allen and Prosper, Allen police said, “At this point there is no offense other than an ordinance violation of solicitation.”

The Atlanta Fox 5 website’s article on the May 2023 flyers left on lawns in Roswell, Georgia, ended by declaring, “Police say they’re investigating if the flyers violated the law.” The Sacramento sheriff’s office told TV station KCRA that they were investigating “what laws are being broken, if any.”

In Eugene, Oregon, after antisemitic leafleting in February 2022, The Eugene Register-Guard reported, “The case is not being investigated by police, which [officials] said is due to it being hate speech and not rising to the level of a hate crime.”

### **McCarthyite atmosphere for pro-Palestine students**

Contrast this hands-off approach with the public meeting cancellations, firings, bannings of student groups and overall repressive McCarthyite atmosphere that since Oct. 7 brands any pro-Palestinian voice as antisemitic.

Columbia University actually changed its school bylaws in order to ban Jewish Voice for Peace and Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) after the groups organized protests supporting Palestinians. Florida governor Ron DeSantis shut down SJP chapters on campuses, while at the same time refusing to condemn openly Nazi protests in Florida, some of which featured placards supporting him.

David Velascom, who had served as editor of Artforum for 18 years, was fired for publishing a letter on Oct. 19 in the magazine stating, “We support Palestinian liberation and call for an end to the killing and harming of all civilians.” Philadelphia sports writer Jackson Frank was fired after tweeting “solidarity with Palestine” in criticism of a 76ers post supporting Israel after Oct. 7. The Houston Hilton hotel shut down a planned conference for the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights.

All of this goes along with Islamophobic violence, which took the life of 6-year-old Wadea Al-Fayoume, stabbed 26 times by his family’s landlord, and resulted in three

Palestinian college students being shot in Burlington, Vermont, one permanently paralyzed from the chest down.

Justifying this rabid anti-Palestinian climate has meant demonizing all pro-Palestinian sentiment as “antisemitic.” Before she was forced to resign, UPenn President Magill publicly apologized for what she called “vile, antisemitic messages projected onto several campus buildings.”

Here were the projected messages she characterized as “vile and antisemitic”:

- Liz Magill, Call for cease-fire now
- Penn funds Palestinian genocide
- From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free
- Free Palestine
- 10,000 murdered by Israeli occupation since October 7

Magill is now out of a job due to her grilling by Rep. Elise Stefanik in Congress. How a right-wing, rabidly anti-immigrant, Trump-defending congressperson like Stefanik could grandstand in Congress as a fierce ally of the Jewish community perfectly embodies the hypocritical nature of the current uproar on antisemitism.

Stefanik has used white nationalist, far-right “great replacement” themes in her campaign ads and complained about undocumented migrants getting infant formula. Now this arch-racist is responsible for driving a nail into the coffin of Magill — to be sure, no friend of the urgent Palestinian cause — and is crowing over her victory on X.

The capitalist media’s myopic and false focus on antisemitism — only when Palestine is being defended — serves to separate the Jewish community from who should be its true class allies: the LGBTQ2S+ community, migrants, women and other people under threat from fascist groupings. These racist forces never fail to use antisemitism to block the anti-capitalist unity of all oppressed communities – those they want to see decimated.

Fortunately the millions in the streets now defending Palestine point the way to the mass action and classwide solidarity needed to overcome genocide, fascist threats and their patrons on Wall Street.

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